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ACCUSED COCAINE KINGPIN CLAIMS TO BE CIA SPY
ATLANTA, GA

Attorneys for former bail bondsman Harold Rosenthal, charged with masterminding the largest cocaine smuggling ring in the nation's history, claim the CIA let him deal drugs in exchange for information.

Authorities ordered extra security precautions for Rosenthal's trial, scheduled to begin in federal court today, because of reports he may attempt to escape.

His attorneys say Rosenthal was given special dispensation for his alleged cocaine trafficking activities in South America because he was a CIA spy.

A federal prosecutor who asked to remain anonymous called the defense claim that Rosenthal was a CIA operative "horse manure." The prosecutor said the charges were "just a fishing expedition (and) smoke screen -- the whole maneuver."

Spokesmen for the CIA in McLean, Va., and the Drug Enforcement Administration in Washington declined comment on the charges.

Attorneys for Rosenthal and Anthony Bonadonna, another defendant in the case, say evidence at the trial will reveal that the CIA engineered a daring escape Rosenthal made in 1981 from a federal prison in Memphis, Tenn.

Rosenthal was indicted Jan. 23 along with 29 others after an 18-month investigation by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force. The indictment alleges that Rosenthal headed a drug ring that smuggled at least five tons of cocaine into the United States between September 1981 and January 1984.

Rosenthal was arrested last September by Colombian police and U.S. agents as he sat in his car in a traffic jam in Bogota, Colombia. Since then, Rosenthal has been in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. Last February, FBI agents intercepted letters he sent from his cell detailing an escape plan involving \$1 million and a team of hired commandos.

According to court documents filed by defense attorneys, Rosenthal was recruited by the CIA to spy on the M-19s and the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Command of Colombia), two Colombian Marxist terrorist groups.

The information Rosenthal funneled to the CIA, the documents said, included information on the two groups, "the movement of arms to the terrorists from (Soviet bloc) countries (and) the purchase of arms from those countries by the terrorists with monies gained from cocaine trafficking."

"U.S. intelligence agencies arranged for Rosenthal to continue his drug trafficking activities in Colombia (as) part of a U.S. intelligence mission to gather vital information on terrorist activities in Colombia," the documents said.

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HEARINGS BEFORE ALLEGED COCAINE KINGPIN's TRAIL
ATLANTA

A week of pretrial hearings began Monday in the case of a former bail bondsman charged with spearheading the nation's largest cocaine smuggling ring.

The hearings began under tight security before jury selection in the trial of Harold Rosenthal, who defense attorneys claim provided information to the CIA in exchange for permission to traffic cocaine in South America.

U.S. District Judge Ernest Tidwell deferred ruling on a motion to dismiss the case because of a news article previewing the trial.

Attorney Bruce Kirwan, representing defendant Leonard Bonnell Steele, argued a federal prosecutor violated court rules by allowing himself to be quoted anonymously in the article.

The prosecutor dismissed as 'horse manure' defense claims that Rosenthal was a CIA operative and said the charges were 'just a fishing expedition (and) smoke screen -- the whole maneuver.'

'I am astounded that it happened,' Tidwell said about the remarks. 'I trust it will never happen again.'

Spokesmen for the CIA in McLean, Va. and the Drug Enforcement Administration in Washington declined to comment on the anonymous statements.

Attorneys for Rosenthal and Anthony Bonadonna, another defendant in the case, say evidence at the trial will reveal the CIA engineered a daring escape Rosenthal made in 1981 from a federal prison in Memphis, Tenn.

Rosenthal was among 30 suspects indicted Jan. 23 after an 18-month investigation by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force. The indictment alleges that Rosenthal headed a drug ring that smuggled at least five tons of cocaine into the United States between September 1981 and January 1984.

Rosenthal has been held in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary since his arrest last September by Colombian police and U.S. agents as he sat in his car in a traffic jam in Bogota, Colombia.

Last February, FBI agents intercepted letters he sent from his prison cell detailing an escape plan involving \$1 million and a team of hired commandoes.

Court documents filed by defense attorneys said Rosenthal was recruited by the CIA to spy on two Colombian Marxist terrorist groups.

The documents said Rosenthal also funneled to the CIA information on 'the movement of arms to the terrorists from (Soviet bloc) countries (and) the purchase of arms from those countries 'y the terrorists with monies gained from cocaine trafficking.

'U.S. intelligence agencies arranged for Rosenthal to continue his drug trafficking activities in Colombia (as) part of a U.S. intelligence mission to gather vital information on terrorist activities in Colombia,' the documents said.